DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 050 887 24 RC 005 323

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TITLE The Urban Mexican American: A Sociocultural Profile.
INSTITUTION New Mexico State Univ., University Park. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.
BUREAU NO BR-6-2469
PUB DATE Jul 71
CONTRACT OEC-1-6-062469-1574
NOTE 23p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Economically Disadvantaged, Economic Development, Educational Development, *Group Dynamics, *Mexican Americans, Research Needs, Rural Urban Differences, Social Characteristics, Social Development, *Sociocultural Patterns, *Urban Culture, *Values

ABSTRACT

Attempting to delineate urban Mexican American life patterns, this analysis seeks to indicate the distinctions in the patterns of life of different types of Mexican Americans in order to provide a workable framework for empirical research. The analytical framework contains 4 levels: the rural novice (from rural areas in the United States) or the immigrant novice (from a rural setting in Mexico) having little education and not conversant in English; the hard-core individual who has rejected society, and/or is deviant as defined by society, and/or is a barrio dweller; the transitory individual who is the would-be assimilate, would-be biculturate, or would-be hard-core regressor; and the mainstream individual who is either an assimilate or a biculturate. This framework, along with the accompanying values schemes and allegiance-group patterns, furnishes general guidelines for mounting action programs for urban Mexican Americans. It is recommended that such programs (1) begin by reinforcing basic Mexican American values, (2) be aimed simultaneously at different economic levels, (3) attempt to supply interdisciplinary technical support, (4) be designed to enable Mexican Americans to help their own, and (5) be national in scope and commitment. The greater issue is the mobilization of effort to enable most Mexican Americans to join the mainstream of United States society. Two figures and 13 references are included. (MJB)

ED050887

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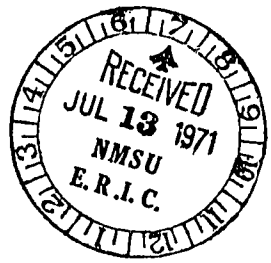
THE URBAN MEXICAN AMERICAN: A SOCIOCULTURAL PROFILE



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July 1971

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
CLEARINGHOUSE ON RURAL EDUCATION AND SMALL SCHOOLS (CRESS)

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Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001

This publication was prepared pursuant to a grant with the Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

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THE URBAN MEXICAN AMERICAN: A SOCIOCULTURAL PROFILE*

The purpose of this paper is methodological: to make an advance in the description of urban Mexican American life-patterns and to provide a workable framework for empirical research. It is important to note at the outset that the remarks herein are meant to be suggestive and are hardly to be considered completely adequate for explaining in full the whole of Mexican American subculture.

The analysis attempts to indicate some important distinctions in the patterns of life of different types of Mexican Americans. Delineation of these distinctions is important because it (1) provides important insights for understanding the "Mexican American," (2) demonstrates that not all urban Mexican Americans are frustrated seekers of Anglo middle-class norms and values, (3) reflects the existent opportunity structure of United States society relative to this group, and (4) provides a framework for generating testable hypotheses for empirical research. The framework presented is considered to be useful for those who seek to fashion solutions of various kinds--economic, social, educational, etc.--to the "Mexican American" problem.

Values

Values in the relevant literature usually have been treated as either fundamental causes[1] or effects[2] of human interactions which, once established, take on a force of their own. This paper refuses to take one or the other of these positions; rather, values are created here as being both derived from and causes of human behaviors in role. Values are considered primary tools for analysis and are important because group values orient individual and group behavior. Values guide the group toward what ought to be and also tell the group what is. They generate the norms of proper conduct. These rules of conduct held

*In addition to the references cited herein, it should be noted that this paper is based on data collected via participant observation on OEO-University of New Mexico applied research projects 1965-68 and periodic short-term observations since then. Direct observations were realized in Albuquerque, New Mexico; El Paso, Texas; Los Angeles, California; and San Jose, California.

by relevant groups make up the common value system which holds the Mexican American cultural group together and which sets it apart. Members are taught to perceive the world in similar and predictable ways in relation to these norms. Violations are dealt with primarily through application of group sanctions and punishments.

Implicit in the structural framework to be described below is the contention that the Mexican American minority group as such would not have survived long had it not held strong common values. And, as the description of types indicates, a Mexican American who loses his belief in the worth and values of his group inevitably becomes confused and distraught. This is a crucial tenet for the logical conclusion that reinforcement of the base ethnic group for Mexican Americans is a critical first step toward assisting him to adapt more adequately to the demands of modern Anglo-directed life. As various studies have indicated, the Mexican American who rejects his group regardless of overt manifestations to the contrary accomplishes it only at tremendous psychological cost and demeaned concept of self.[3]

The Concept of Allegiance Groups

The concept of allegiance groups is central to understanding the dynamic interactions involved in the Mexican American's development of a style of life. Mexican American behavior as conceptualized here is a function of allegiance-group orientations and the more general cultural orientation of personal motivations relative to perceived life-chances. The hypothesis is advanced that "allegiance"-group orientation is the most powerful cultural referent point employed by Mexican Americans to steer through life. The allegiance group wields a far more pervasive influence and requires a more total commitment to group values than typical Anglo patterns of social-group participation.

To demonstrate the dynamic functionality of the concept of the allegiance group, it is necessary first to describe how a person's lifestyle evolves from a total value scheme. For analytical purposes, life can be divided into seven basic areas (institutions) of human concerns: economics, politics, family, religion, education, health, and recreation.[4] Every member of society has a basic set of orienting values relative to

these seven areas by which he evaluates a given situation. The allegiance group in the Mexican American cultural group is the principal coordinate system used by the individual to determine proper behavioral response. Such discernment can occur physically and consciously as a result of group interaction or individually through internalization of the group standards and norms applicable to the specific situation.

Selecting an appropriate behavioral response can be viewed in the following manner. Initially, the individual becomes aware in the ways prescribed by his personality and culture. The decision to motivate for action, however, is a function of his cognitive, cathectic, and evaluative perceptions of alternative behavioral responses measured against the value standards of the allegiance group brought into play.[5] Proposed actions are judged in relation to the normative and value patterns prescribed by the allegiance-group orientation toward the institutionalized values for that area. This then requires the assignment of primacy to the status-roles of one area (institution). Thus, Mexican American behaviors are functions of the patterned adjustments in role relative to the central set of institutionalized values interpreted through the filter of the allegiance-group standards of performance. The life-style of an individual Mexican American, then, is the total package of prescribed performances determined by the total number of allegiance groups referred to in the myriad of possible responses to life.

The economic base and the stratification scheme of the greater society exert great influence upon individual life-styles in that they determine hierarchically the place or relevance of perceived behavioral alternatives relative to basic needs as well as the availability of possible allegiance groups. The economic base shapes the orientations of its members toward time, work, organization, aspirations, etc. In a technological society, the individual tends to be oriented toward work on an impersonal basis due to the urban-industrial pressures toward a segmentalized existence. Mass consumption and the need for coordinative efforts on a large scale demand impersonal handling of large numbers of people who work to gain a living in a place where the obligation to the worker ceases with the five-o'clock whistle. This contrasts sharply with the diffused role pattern structure in the agrarian setting where the cyclical nature of an agrarian economy tends to develop "traditional" orientations.

The influence of the economic base factor is important in analyzing Mexican American behavior because, historically, the economy of this group has been agrarian-based. This holds true to a great extent even today with many Mexican American types, due primarily to proximity of the border and the constant "replenishment" pattern of immigration from Mexico.

In short, allegiance groups play a key role in determining "rightness" and "wrongness" of a particular situation for Mexican American individuals as they adjust to the system. The particular allegiance group brought into play varies with the nature of the situation. The number of allegiance groups available to an individual will vary also with social class. The sum total of allegiance groups available will increase with a vertical rise in social class. Conversely, the lower the social class, the fewer the number of allegiance groups and the more segments of life-behavior will any one allegiance group influence.

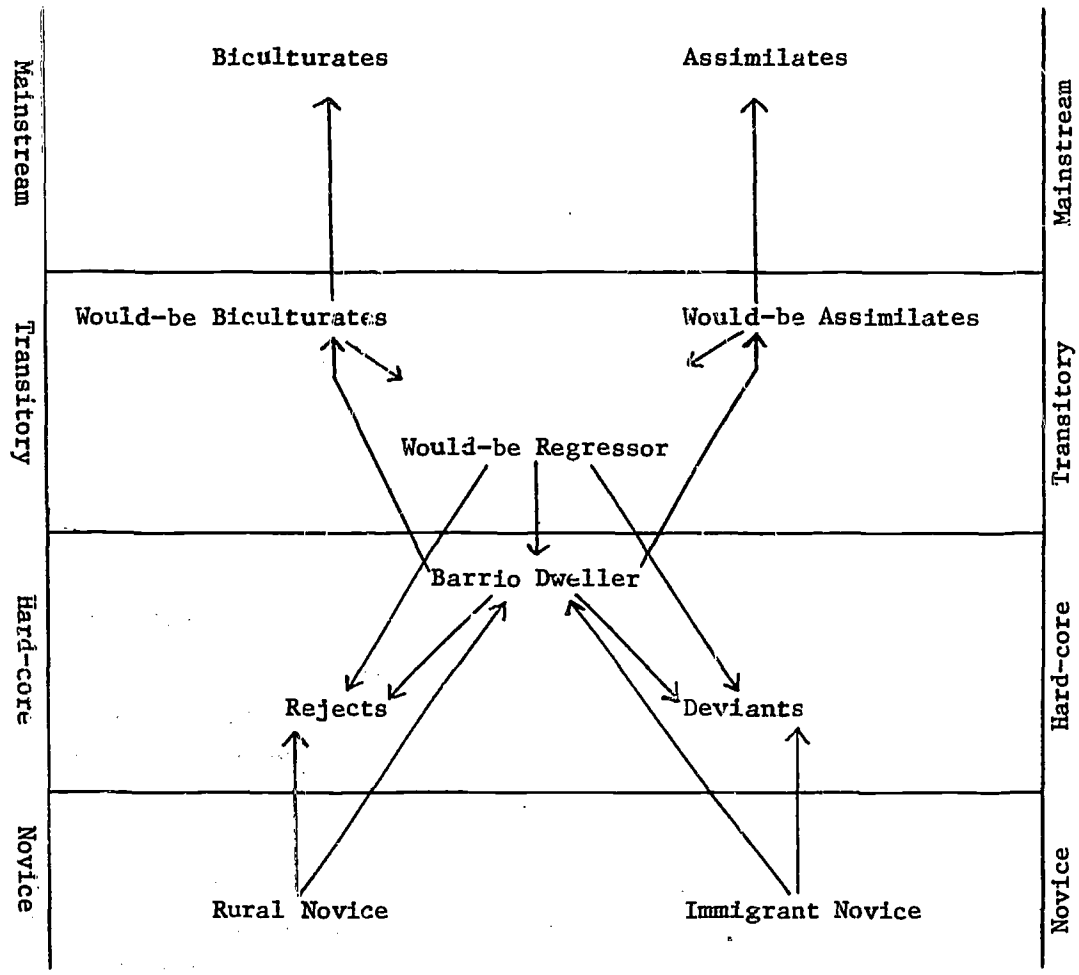
The Framework

The accommodational pattern of the Mexican American relative to the greater society can be described as consisting of four basic level types: (1) novice, (2) hard-core, (3) transitory, and (4) mainstream. The basic typology is summarized in Figure 1. It is important to note that these are "pure" or "ideal types" and are used in an effort to provide a framework for examining important differentiating characteristics within the Mexican American minority group. The characteristics described are not meant to be exhaustive but rather attempt only to highlight significant characteristics. Together they form the patterned response of the Mexican American to the opportunities and deprivations encountered in American society. These responses can be viewed as functions of the resources and opportunities available to the Mexican American, whose life is closely geared to the differential availability of income, education, and occupational opportunities within his subcultural set.*

*It should be noted also that principal attention is given to the economically deprived categories. The emphasis is an intended one.

Figure 1

TYPOLOGY OF MEXICAN AMERICAN IDEAL TYPES:
RELATIVE POSITION, STATUS PRESTIGE FLOW,
AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS



The Novice Group

The novice group of urban Mexican Americans consists of (1) those who have recently arrived from the rural areas of a state and (2) recent immigrants from Mexico. Both the rural novice and the immigrant novice belong to the lower social classes and have economic reasons as their primary motives for moving to an urban area. Virtually all live in the most run-down areas of the Mexican American ghettos.

The rural novice, although a United States citizen, comes ill-equipped to operate in the urban setting. He comes from an agrarian setting that itself has been changed by technological times from the traditional "landed patron-underling" reciprocal relationship to what Clark Knowlton calls a "political patron" situation.[6] In the latter patron situation, the protection, food, medicine, and other necessities of life for underlings are provided by the patron through political "pull" and manipulation of state and Federal agency resources rather than through personal wealth derived from the land. The essential reciprocity is maintained, but the underling repays through loyalty and blocks of votes--not as he once did through loyalty and hard labor. The patron wields pervasive power through his actions and through his wishes being "internalized" in his groups of people.

The underling in the agrarian setting has only two principal allegiance groups: patron-compadrazgo kin and lineal (close) kin. The patron-oriented allegiance group is used in making decisions on major matters such as economics, health (major), education, politics, recreation. The "close-kin allegiance group" rules on religion, personal health (minor), and family matters. These groups are not mutually exclusive.

When the rural novice leaves the agrarian setting, he is thrown upon the close-kin group for primary support and direction in all areas of life. He necessarily has broken with the setting dominated by the agrarian patron and is in the process of shifting completely his orientation in the corresponding areas. Many times, the motivation to move stems directly or indirectly from the deteriorating position of the allegiance group, of which he has been a part. The increase of rural-to-urban mobility indicates that the rural areas of many southwestern states are steadily losing members. The young are the first to go; therefore, large families cannot deliver the "votes" as before. This results in a downward

spiraling effect upon the allegiance group in terms of the economic rewards it can expect from the system. Knowlton[7] described the process of system decline this way:

> Its supporting economic and social systems have been eroded away. The most important cause of the decline was the destruction of the village economic system that maintained it. The village economic system bled to death through loss of its lands to the Anglo-Americans by violence, fraud, excessive land taxes, unwise use of credit, and the problems of adjustment to a strange and unfamiliar economic and political system. One authority states that from the 1880's to the 1930's, the Spanish Americans lost over 2,000,000 acres of private lands, 1,700,000 acres of communal lands, 1,800,000 acres taken over by the state, and vast areas confiscated by the federal government .... The collapse of the traditional village economic system destroyed the economic basis.... Unable to earn a living, many extended patriarchal families disintegrated, as their nuclear units reluctantly and bitterly migrated to urban centers. Although long visits, exchange of letters, and financial assistance are used to maintain family bonds, the authority of the family patriarch came to an end. The villages in time came to consist of apathetic fragments... unable to cooperate together for the common good of the village. The social organization of the village was destroyed.

Because his move to the urban area has been accomplished usually with the help of a family member who lives in the urban area, the rural novice becomes dependent upon that individual and his group. This state of dependency is further reinforced by the fact that the rural novice usually has made the move without his nuclear family and with the understanding that these family members will follow as soon as the "economics" of the situation permit. The "urban kin" assist the rural novice in getting started by showing him how and where to find employment and Government-agency assistance and by guiding him generally through the maze of urban life.

As the situation improves, the rural novice finds a job, is joined by his immediate family, and "learns the ropes." He begins to urbanize. Depending upon the degree of success that he has in landing employment and upon the kin group with which he has allied, he will begin to move toward hard-core status. Rarely will the jump be made directly from novice to transitory status.

The immigrant novice arrives even more poorly equipped for urban life than the rural novice. He too comes from a primarily rural setting, but with the added handicap of a foreign background. He may or may not be a naturalized United States citizen. If he has his citizenship, it will have been recently acquired. He knows virtually no English and has little education, if any. This is in spite of the fact that he and sometimes his immediate family have probably been following the "beet" or "cotton picking" migratory cycles for a number of years in this country.

The immigrant novice moves to the city in search of a better economic and social status. He will have immigrated originally from Mexico to escape poverty or political or religious disorder. He shares with the rural novice the common denominators of poverty and a personal psychological state of flux in principal orientation caused by the break with rural life.

In some ways, the immigrant novice is better off. Because of the cyclic nature of migrant life, he has experienced already the environmental pressures which force the break with the traditional extended family pattern. His nuclear family will be comparatively more "seasoned" to undertake the new crisis period.

The immigrant novice is dependent also upon "kin" to get him started. If he has come to the urban ghetto via the migrant route, he will probably have his nuclear family with him. Depending upon how things go, the family may stay or may be sent back to Mexico to wait until the economic situation improves sufficiently. If he has come directly from Mexico, the pattern usually will be a series of hops from rural to more urban (in Mexico) to a large border city (in Mexico) and across the border to a United States city. Many times, the initial hop across the border is followed by a hop to California or Chicago before the setting-in process begins. In this case, the immigrant novice will be alone and hoping to improve his economic situation quickly in order to send for his family.

The immigrant novice is extremely naive, handicapped by language and cultural barriers, and usually impervious to almost all acts of covert prejudice and discrimination. Even most of the overt acts of

discrimination go unnoticed by him--lost in the glitter and bustle of big-city life. Everything is strange; therefore, he quickly is conditioned to expect the unexpected, and strange behaviors from strange people become just one more psychodelic exploding flash in a whirling world.

The immigrant novice, like the rural novice, relies almost completely upon the kinship allegiance group to guide him. He seeks openly and desperately to identify and internalize the standards of this group. He knows little, unlike his rural counterpart who knows the welfare agency well, about Government agencies which can assist as a last resort in an emergency.

For both groups in the novice category, basic physiological needs comprise the single major concern of life. The greatest part of every day, week, or any segment of time is taken up with satisfying these needs. Higher needs or value activities cannot be a real concern for the simple reason that they interfere with primary activities. Efforts to divert energies of this group into irrelevant areas of activity are met with negative, sometimes savagely violent, reactions.

The time that the individual allots to the allegiance group is sometimes mistakenly judged by "outsiders" to be wasted time, or proof that these "types" lack ambition because they devote so much time to recreation and family even when almost starving to death. Outsiders miss the point entirely! The allegiance group performs the function of educating the individual for existence. There is no school for these "types." Primarily, they are adults who are desperately in need of direction and support. The "outside world" is deciphered here in this kin-allegiance group mistakenly referred to by certain shallow-minded sociologists as "only" a manifestation of the extended family. The skills for manipulating the urban environment are learned in the allegiance group. And, at this level, the allegiance group provides direction for virtually all sectors of life.

Only as the novice learns the ropes, establishes occupational ties, and begins to gain "breathing space" from basic needs pressures can he begin his move in status. In short, during this period of his life, novice perspective relative to core values is colored by a preoccupation with the economic area of life. Basic economics is elevated to a position

of primacy in the hierarchy. Religion values, for example, are brought in primarily to rationalize the "bad times," etc.

The Hard-core Group

The hard-core group consists of those who have rejected society (means, goals, etc.); those whom society classifies as deviant; and the economically deprived who share barrio existence with the other two but who provide the principal direction and tone to Mexican American barrio life. For purposes of this analysis, these individuals have been labeled (1) rejects, (2) deviants, and (3) barrio dwellers.

The rejects group is comprised of individuals who have renounced society. Continued failure and inability to cope with the demands of the dominant society, as well as of the subculture, cause the individual to "renounce" and "escape" the chase. Merton's description[8] applies to this type:

> ...the frustrated and handicapped individual who cannot cope with this order drops out. Defeatism, quietism, and resignation are manifested in escape mechanisms which ultimately lead the individual to "escape" from the requirements of the society. It is an expedient which arises from continued failure to attain the goal by legitimate measures and from an inability to adopt the illegitimate route because of internalized prohibitions and institutionalized compulsives, during which process the supreme value of the success-goal has as yet not been renounced. The conflict is resolved by eliminating both precipitating elements, the goals and the means. The escape is complete, the conflict is eliminated and the individual is socialized.

These are, for the most part, peripheral residents of the barrio. They are the main-line drug addicts, chronic alcoholics, etc.

This is the group of individuals who have internalized the goals of the "American Dream" so completely that, when faced with continuous failure in their efforts to achieve, they can neither adopt illegitimate means to those ends nor can they revert to the minority culture they have rejected. Thus, the only recourse is a forced escape into degeneracy.

The deviants are those individuals who have succumbed to the goals (at least the material) pushed by the greater society but who have not internalized the prescribed "acceptable" routes outlined for Mexican

American members by society to achieve those goals. These individuals have turned to illegitimate means to attain their goals. This response is seen by Lohman[9] as a "normal" response to a situation where the cultural emphasis upon pecuniary success has been absorbed but where there is little access to conventional and legitimate means for attaining such success. Merton[10] points out that two important features are inherent in this situation:

> First, such antisocial behavior is in a sense "called forth" by certain conventional values of the culture and by the class structure involving differential access to the approved opportunities for legitimate, prestige-bearing pursuit of the culture goals .... The second consideration is of equal significance. Recourse to the first of the alternative responses, legitimate effort, is limited by the fact that actual advance toward desired success-symbols through conventional channels is, despite our persisting open-class ideology, relatively rare and difficult for those handicapped by little formal education and few economic resources. The dominant pressure of group standards of success is, therefore, on the gradual attenuation of legitimate, but by and large ineffective, strivings and the increasing use of illegitimate, but more or less effective, expedients of vice and crime. The cultural demands made on persons in this situation are incompatible. On the one hand, they are asked to orient their conduct toward the prospect of accumulating wealth and on the other, they are largely denied effective opportunities to do so institutionally.

Thus, when society extols the "success for all" goal above all else to all segments of the population and then highly restricts the approved routes to success, a "normal" response can be criminal deviancy. Rather than succumb to an intolerable life beset by anxiety and neurotic feelings of personal unworthiness, the individual chooses other avenues to attain society's symbols of success. The end justifies the means.

However, even the choice to go "illegit" does not automatically produce the deviant type. Besides the social pressures which promote deviancy, there is the factor which Cloward[11] calls "differentials in availability of illegitimate means." Just as conventional society differentially distributes the means to attain success (social class, position, availability of education, etc.), so does the so-called underworld. The Mexican American predisposed to go deviant must "make the grade." He must pass the test of acceptability to that status. He must possess

the intelligence, nerve, verbal ability, loyalty, and honesty for the profession of deviant. The opportunities to go deviant are limited and are far from automatic. This exemplifies again added pressures which force a reject choice where an individual cannot make the "grade" in either league.

After the Mexican American deviant prospect passes the tests, he must prove himself. This requires that he undergo a period of specific training and learning the ropes. The nature of the training will vary with the type of criminal activity which characterizes the criminal group chosen. The type of activity will usually depend upon the "outside" environment. After being trained, the Mexican American deviant has to prove himself a successful recruit in actual trial situations. If he passes, he moves into deviant status. If he fails, he is either dropped or relegated to a peripheral position.

It is important to note that the deviant world of the urban Mexican American is patterned, orderly, and goal-directed. Except for those individuals at the top of the hierarchy, the location of the majority of those activities is within the confines of the barrio area. Depending upon the size of the organization, its leadership, and the environmental situation, there may be several main income-producing activities (narcotics, gambling, prostitution, etc.) and other branch activities which may be legitimate or semi-legitimate.

The primary allegiance group for these members is necessarily occupation-centered. The obvious need for group solidarity against the threatening pressures from the outside shapes the standards of required performance. Except for those individuals at the top of the hierarchy, there is little opportunity to depend upon the usual kin or familial allegiance groups--although many of the deviants may be lineally related. Interestingly, the emphasis at all times within the structure is upon performance.

Family life in the reject group is female-based. The male is marginal. The family circle usually includes mostly females. The male is a sexual partner and a sporadic provider. His episodic existence leaves little time for rendering affection. He is made a model by default in the family. The mother attempts to teach the child about manliness and

the role of the male by using the father as an example of what a male should not be.

Family life in the deviant home is very similar to that of the regular barrio dweller, which will be discussed next. The raising of children is primarily the woman's responsibility. Children's roles are sharply differentiated. The mother is the source of affection. The father provides thrust and direction for the family pattern. The father provides disciplining necessary to ensure proper "respect" in the proper manner toward group members, family, and property. The father gives the male child preferential attention when he reaches puberty because his role is the more complex one to learn. He must be taught how to cope with the "outside world." The female role has few contacts with the "outside."

The rejects and deviants constitute the two polar types in the hard-core group. The regular barrio dwellers, the last to be described in this group, comprise the majority of the hard-core subtypes. These individuals are the poor who work, who are more or less honest (judged from the standpoint of the greater society), and who have fashioned a separate life from the dominant society within the structure. This group is distinguished by a ritualized existence where the outside world is actively participated in to the extent required in order to further a tightly knit inner society. Here if anywhere in the Mexican American group is where there exists a truly "parallel" society. The central characteristic of the barrio dweller is the main role played by the "lineal kin-compadrazgo-close friend" allegiance group. The outside world is important as a means for maintaining the group. The outside is looked upon with hostility or, at best, detachment.

Work is a necessary means for furthering the goals of the group. The individual identifies with the group first and the job secondly. Here is the meaning of the much-quoted Mexican American concern with "who the person is" as opposed to "what he does." It is not that the goals of success in work and aspiration for advancement are absolutely rejected so much as that they are secondary in the priorities of life.

This collateral orientation is the Mexican American's adaptive response to the ceilings placed upon him by the greater society. The pressures, opportunities, and attractions of the larger society are judged

here for all members of the group in terms of effects on the ongoing pattern of life which has been developed by the Mexican American subculture.

A person's position depends upon how well he fits--how well he furthers, supports, and conforms to the standards of the group. Because the allegiance group as a group can exert little influence upon the greater society in the economic area, other areas are emphasized. The economics of life are essential for existence but not at the expense of the group--not at the expense of "la raza."

Success is defined in different terms from that which exists in the majority culture. It becomes less object- (material-) oriented and more person-oriented. Individuality is expressed within the group in the form of reinforcing and supporting the inner values of the group rather than by individual, "go it alone," occupation-centered rise to personal glorification behavior in the outside world. The feeling prevails that personal success at the price of disowning one's people (la raza) is an empty prize.

Individuality and competitiveness are expressed, but within the structure of the group. Such traits are expressed through badgering, competitive baiting, etc.--all within the "rules" of the group which require that an individual not overstep and attempt to exalt his personal virtues. If this occurs, he risks attack by the entire group. Within the group, care is taken that every member of the group is brought in and that each view be expressed to reinforce group solidarity.

The allegiance group is an extended one which consciously attempts a division of labor relative to the major areas. Individuals within the group are recognized "experts" in religion, business, and labor and in mechanical, recreational, and related areas. Talents of the experts are at the disposal of the group individually and collectively. This obligation is a reciprocal one that is assumed by every member of the group.

The allegiance group is segregated, although both the male and female counterpart elements are viewed as part of "the group." It is not usually made up only of peers, although most may be the same age. The usual case, however, will be comprised of "neighborhoods" that have elder, middle, and young-adult groups which form the allegiance group. The peer group, as such, functions as the all-important group probably only at the teenage level. The "corner boy" society described by Whyte[12] is a fairly accurate

portrayal of Mexican American teen life in the barrio. The qualification needs to be made, however, that in the teen Mexican American group the "deviant" and "reject" influences are much more pronounced and apparent.

Education for this group is important in that it can help an individual obtain a better-paying job. School, however, is "bad" in that it attempts to turn group members away from their own people. It is run by "out of it" and "cold" types who have no sense of "respect" for individual rights and who are immoral and more often than not effeminate. Such individuals do not understand the realities of life and require a rejection of personal worth in return for what they say they have to offer. The "leaders" cannot guarantee a job, although they insist that school attendance is the only route to success. School completely ignores the fact that high-school Mexican Americans are young adults, and it insists on treating Mexican American youths like children.

In addition to the kinship primary allegiance group described above, the individual uses also an occupation-centered group to adapt to the requirements of the greater society. This fills vacuums in areas where the standards of the group are either not affected at all or do not "fit" a particular situation.

The Transitory Group

The transitory group is comprised of three basic types: (1) the would-be assimilate, (2) the would-be biculturate, and (3) the would-be hard-core regressor. These are the individuals in the middle-ground area. They have been sold on the quest for the American Dream and have launched themselves after it. They now find themselves with a foot in two camps, so to speak. They are not really well integrated in either group although all have experienced some social mobility. They do not yet have the extensive social contacts in the Anglo-dominated society which are so necessary for complete acculturation to a "proper" style of life in the majority culture. Their existence is characterized by a high degree of insecurity. Blau's description[13] of the socially mobile middle type applies to this group:

> For it is true that the mobile individual is poorly integrated, it follows not only that there is relatively little communication

> between him and others, but also that he does not receive much social support from them. In the absence of extensive communication, he cannot fully assimilate the style of life of the members of his new social class, with the result that his beliefs and practices are intermediate between theirs and those of the members of his class or origin. Simultaneously, lack of firm social support engenders feelings of insecurity, and this has the result that the mobile person tends to assume the extreme position, not the intermediate one, in respect to those attitudes that constitute expressions of insecurity.

The would-be assimilate is the overconforming Mexican American who turns more WASPish than the average Anglo. He is in the process of attempting to divest himself of all vestiges of Mexicanness. He has been convinced of the American values and that the only way to succeed is to conform to the behavior he sees as prescribed for him by society. Because he is Mexican American and physically different, this requires that he show how un-Mexican he is by "out-Angloing" the Anglo. Many times, such an individual marries an Anglo in an overt conscious rejection of Mexican self. He is convinced that only what is Anglo can be beautiful, desirable, and worthy of his aspiration. He refuses completely to speak Spanish and forbids his children to speak Spanish. In public, he refuses to acknowledge openly that he can speak Spanish. In his drive to succeed, he is out to prove that he can outstrip the Joneses in the Joneses' world.

The would-be biculturate has accepted certain values of the American Dream and is in the process of seeking to learn the rules of the "game" in order to achieve these values. His life is made more difficult, however, because he is unable to reject his background. The concept of his people is real--la raza means something; however, he is committed also to the goals which signify an economically better life. He is caught between the strong pull of both. He usually reaches this point as a direct result of some special skill, either inherent or acquired, which enables him to barter competitively on the economic market. He is able to barter his talent in exchange for the material rewards which, in turn, place him in position to aspire for more of the same.

Both the would-be biculturate and the would-be assimilate have acquired additional allegiance groups to fit their more segmentalized

existence. The new allegiance orientations are occupation-centered primarily. Additional groups are acquired to refer to in those areas considered all-important to success in the Anglo game. Both of these types of individuals are in the process of extricating themselves from the all-pervasive influence of the barrio-dweller group. It is true that the would-be assimilate does so with greater gusto and finality as compared with the would-be biculturate; however, both must make the break--and most especially in those areas where the conglomerate of values, norms, etc., mitigates against deferred gratification, achievement, and personal independence.

As a consequence, both types of individuals are thrown upon the nuclear family for primary personal support and encouragement. This is further reinforced by urbanization patterns and geographical mobility pressures which require periodic job-connected moves. The nuclear family becomes the primary referent for family matters. For the would-be assimilate, this takes the form of professing and acting out completely what he has come to believe are Anglo standards of family performance. For the would-be biculturate, this takes the form of acting out internalized barrio-dweller standards where possible and adapting those which do not conflict with newly acquired norms and values. The crucial difference is that, for the one, complete rejection and all the perceived new are "good;" for the other, the old is cherished and impossible to discard but is necessarily adapted or reluctantly discarded.

The would-be hard-core regressor is one who has internalized initially the values of success but then--because of lack of complete personal commitment, inability to acquire the economic means, or some other factor which makes it impossible for him to make the grade--begins to regress. This type of individual is in the process of rejecting the chase. He has found that it just is not worth it. If he goes on to reject the values and prescribed means of the Anglo world but not those of the Mexican American, then he reverts to barrio-dweller status. If he rejects both, he regresses eventually to hard-core reject status. And if he rejects the Anglo goals and means and partially those of the barrio dweller, he may try to capitalize on his new skills by trying for hard-core deviant status.

The Mainstream Group

The mainstream group is comprised of two basic types: the assimilate and the biculturate. Both have "arrived" in terms of being able to function effectively in the greater society. Economically stable, socially accepted, and in positions of power, these individuals have learned the game. They have internalized the value systems, rules, norms, etc. Family life is organized about the nuclear family in an "adult-directed" manner. The number of allegiance groups has been greatly expanded, and the term "allegiance" now becomes something of a misnomer. Such groups are now really no more than reference groups since each serves a limited function for a limited segment of life. They are no longer necessarily occupation-centered, although the lines between what is strictly "business" and what is strictly "pleasure" blur at this level.

The difference between the two groups is that the assimilate takes his acquired, or in some cases inherited, success to be proof that justifies his rejection of Mexican American self and commits him further to the totality of what he perceives to be the Anglo system. If he has married an Anglo, this ensures that his offspring will be brought up "right." The assimilates who are offspring of those who have made their way "up" the ladder are atypical in that they are, for present analytical purposes, not really Mexican American. Only in his children can the assimilate reach that ultimate personal dream to be truly Anglo.

The biculturate sees in success the opportunity for greater leeway to participate in the fruits of both cultures. He is quick to see and seek out business-connected opportunities to capitalize on his biculturalism. In the greater society, he is able to put to good use the group-participation skills learned long ago. He finds that the upper-level power-game relationships are in some ways very similar to the give and take of the old "allegiance group." Certainly the stakes are monetarily higher, but the scope is no more pervasive. Because of his Mexicanness, he is able also to retain what he considers to be a more humanistic orientation in personal interest and hobbies--music, art, people, etc.

Figure 2 summarizes the adaptive styles discussed. As the typology indicates, the preceding analysis centers around group acceptance or rejection of societal goals and the means available to the Mexican American to achieve those goals.

Figure 2

TYPOLOGY OF ADULT MEXICAN AMERICAN LIFE-STYLES RELATIVE TO GOALS AND MEANS OF SOCIETY

GROUP	IDEAL TYPE	GOALS	MEANS
Mainstream	Biculturate	Accepted [1]	Accepted [1]
	Assimilate	Accepted	Accepted
Transitory	Would-be Biculturate	Accepted [2]	Accepted [2]
	Would-be Assimilate	Accepted	Accepted
	Would-be Regressor	In Process of Rejecting	In Process of Rejecting
Hard-core	Barrio Dweller	Redefined	Redefined
	Reject	Rejected	Rejected
	Deviant	Accepted	Rejected
Novice	Rural Novice	Accepted	No Decision [3]
	Immigrant Novice	Accepted	No Decision [3]

1. Accepted on own terms.

2. In the process of accepting on own terms.

3. Societal goals (at least the material-gain economic ones) accepted since this is what drew such individuals to the urban United States. (These individuals are in no position, however, to accept or reject means since they do not yet understand the rules of the game.)

Summary

The foregoing presented a four-level framework for analyzing urban Mexican American life patterns. Ideal-type life patterns at each level were described in some detail. Individual and group responses to life were shown to be measured against set standards which had to be cleared through the relevant allegiance group brought into play for a particular situation.

The framework and the concepts developed to explain the dynamism of group interactions at each level need to be tested more systematically before completely useful applications can be made to the fields of education and economic and social development. However, even in its present incompletely verified state, the analytical framework furnishes useful general guidelines for mounting action programs to assist the urban Mexican American. It is possible to conclude that projects and programs designed to assist the Mexican American as a group must (1) begin by reinforcing basic Mexican American values, (2) be aimed simultaneously at different economic levels, (3) attempt to supply interdisciplinary technical support, (4) be designed to enable Mexican Americans to help their own, and (5) be national in scope and commitment.

The author confesses to a social engineering bias and believes very strongly that the best way to verify is to employ and seek the hard data within the proposed framework in action projects which deal with real urban barrio problems. Only through genuine involvement in programs aimed to promote real change will the dynamic interplay of forces be focused sharply enough to depict clearly the value patterns and the important influences of the allegiance groups.

The question of how best to mobilize the efforts required to enable a greater percentage of Mexican Americans to join more fully the mainstream of United States society is the bigger issue; implicitly, this is the basic reason for delving into the foregoing framework. Real progress for the Mexican American--measured in terms of greater human dignity, economic advancement, and more equitable educational development--requires herculean efforts on the part of both those within the minority group as well as those of the greater society. This will be no easy task, given

important class-linked differentiating characteristics of that subpopulation usually lumped under the single heading of the "Mexican American problem," and given the present level of "uncommitment" of the greater "Anglo American" United States society to respond to the needs of this minority population.

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